



WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

GRADES 9-12

BACKGROUND

The combustion of oil, natural gas, and coal has fueled the world's industry and need for power for over two centuries. Most scientists agree, however, that the increased greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels have not only polluted the atmosphere, but have multiplied the greenhouse effect, causing a warming planet and climate change. Many scientists, organizations, politicians and individuals are calling for legislation to curb these greenhouse gas emissions due to the many human, environmental and economic consequences of climate change.

DEFINITIONS

Policy- A proposed or adopted course or principle of action

Law- Any system of regulations to govern the conduct of the people of a community, society, or nation, in response to the need for regularity, consistency and justice based upon collective human experience

Legislation- Laws, collectively

POLICIES TO DISCUSS

Kyoto Protocol

http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php

California Assembly Bill 32: Global Warming Solutions Act

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/ab32/ab32.htm>

American Clean Energy and Security Act

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/111/hr2454>

Climate Change Legislation 2013

<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43230.pdf>

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students research climate change legislation and its effectiveness, singly or in groups.

Suggestions for student presentations:

- a. News report (could be video)
- b. Oral report
- c. Song or music video
- d. PowerPoint/Prezi presentation
- e. Skit (could be video)

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

- a. Is this legislation effective? Why or why not?
- b. Do you think this legislation will be effective? Why or why not? (for proposed legislation)
- c. What changes could be made to make it more effective?
- d. Is the legislation strong enough? Is it too stringent to be followed?
- e. Who is impacted by the legislation?
- f. What is the state of the legislation today? Is it being followed, and how effectively?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42613.pdf>

(Climate Change and Existing Law: A Survey of Legal Issues Past, Present, and Future - produced by US Congressional Research Service)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/26/opinion/bittersweet-achievement-on-climate.html>

(New York Times op-ed titled "Bittersweet Achievement on Climate")

<http://web.law.columbia.edu/climate-change>

(Columbia Law School's Center for Climate Change Law website)